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HEALTH

Seniors ‘deteriorating’: Families dissatisfied with N.S. new long-term care home visitation rules

By **Elizabeth McSheffrey** • **Global News**
Posted August 28, 2020 3:42 pm

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WATCH: Earlier this week, the Nova Scotia government eased some of the restrictions on visitors to seniors in long-term care homes. But as Elizabeth McSheffrey reports, the families of those residents say the changes fall short. – Aug 28, 2020

Before the COVID-19 pandemic struck Nova Scotia, prompting a lockdown in long-term care homes across the province, Northwood resident Yvonne Schwartz could walk.

Her active social life at the seniors’ residence in downtown Halifax included visits with friends, games of bridge, shopping, and the meticulous application of lipstick and jewelry.

But after five months of confinement to her room, Schwartz’s muscles have given up on her.

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“She stopped wanting to bother getting dressed because there didn’t seem to be any point,” said Crooks. “She just can’t walk any distance anymore.”

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The sisters are among many Nova Scotia residents calling for the government to make meaningful accommodations for families who want to provide proper company, care and stimulation to their loved ones in long-term care (LTC) homes.

They’re asking for the ability to take their loved ones home for visits, to care for them in their residence rooms at LTC homes and to have enough flexibility that they can visit more than once per week.

1:56
Families protest against continuing visitor restrictions ...

Families protest against continuing visitor restrictions in long-term care homes – Aug 4, 2020

On Wednesday, Premier Stephen McNeil and Dr. Robert Strang announced a “further loosening of restrictions” for LTC residents, allowing family members to accompany them to medical appointments, and removing the cap on the number of designated people allowed to visit a resident indoors.

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They also allowed some community-based adult programming to resume,

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While those changes were “long overdue,” said Marriott, in practice, they amount to a “meaningless soundbite.”

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“When you say lifting restrictions on a cap on visitors, it sounds like they’re going to have all the visitors they want and they’re going to be in their room,” she explained.

“That is not the reality. You’re still physically distanced, you’re wearing a mask, the resident is wearing a mask, and you have to be supervised.”

The conditions that must be met to facilitate visits require a lot of time, space and staff to implement, said the sisters, meaning some LTC homes can only accommodate a handful of visitors a day and some can’t handle them at all.

“The facility my mother is in posted on their site, it says they can manage approximately 15 visitors a week,” said Marriott.

“They have hundreds of residents there, so it really is a meaningless thing in many institutions.”

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In a written statement to Global News, the province said it recognizes the

“valuable role” that families play in supporting the mental and physical health of LTC residents, but safety is its top priority.

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“Facilities will implement measures when they can do so safely,” wrote Communications Nova Scotia spokesperson Carole Rankin.

“It is up to each facility to determine the best location for indoor visits. For some facilities, this may include in-room visits.”

But the government will wait, the statement said, for Public Health to deem it safe before easing any restrictions further.

2:37
Daughter of Northwood resident says restricted visitat...

Daughter of Northwood resident says restricted visitations not enough – Aug 20, 2020

That may be too late for Bridgewater sisters Vikki Avery and Lana Bishop, whose mother, Lucina, lives with Alzheimer’s at Arborstone Enhanced Care in Halifax.

They say the current restrictions prohibit them from spending any “quality time” with their mother, and they question how that improves the quality of life.

“She knows us today, but this time right now is real precious,” said Avery. “We lost six months of her knowing us, and you know every day she knows less.”

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Stephanie Stanislow, whose father Frank Stanislow is a resident of the Camp Bill Veterans Memorial Building in Halifax, said it’s hard to help seniors understand why they continue to live under lockdown conditions that don’t apply to anyone else in Nova Scotia.

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“He’s deteriorating with it, I think all the seniors are,” she told Global News. “It’s gone too far now. They’re suffering now more than they would from COVID.”

Stanislow and several others are organizing a protest next Tuesday, calling for the government to allow more visitation freedom.

The protest will take place at 11 a.m. at Grand Parade, and end outside Scotia Square, the building where the chief medical officer of health works.

Canadian cases

CONFIRMED	DEATHS	AT LEAST ONE DOSE	FULLY VACCINATED
1,421,327	26,446	78.73%	50.69%
(today: +200)	(today: +7)	of Canadians aged 12+	of Canadians aged 12+

Source: Esri Canada

Check out our Coronavirus Tracker for more details and maps

Last Updated: July 13, 2021, at 11:00:00 am EST

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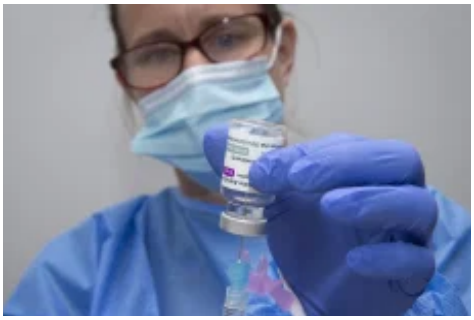

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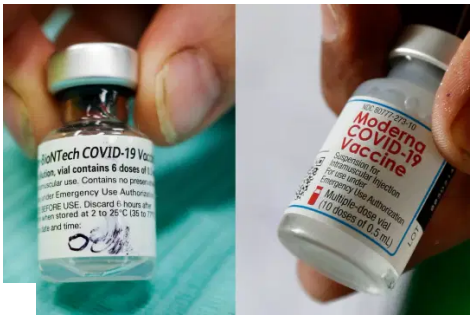

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